

# **An Interview with Charles Henson**



**Interviewed by Harold Oaks  
Theatre and Media Arts Department History Project 2011**

**Harold Oaks:** Where were you born and raised?

**Charles Henson:** I was born August 14, 1930, in Santa Ana, California. I'm the oldest of four children in the Alfred M. and Anna Wade Henson family. I received my elementary education in Garden Grove, California, and graduated from Garden Grove High School in June 1948. After attending one semester at Santa Ana Junior College, I entered the Air Force on January 17, 1949, during the Korean War. I was stationed at an Air Force base in Omaha, Nebraska, and served four years and nine months.

**Oaks:** What did you do in the Air Force?

**Henson:** I was a member of the 702nd Air Force Band.

**Oaks:** What did you play?

**Henson:** I played the saxophone. I started playing when I was in the fifth grade. The school started a band and I announced to my father that I was going to play in the band. He wanted to know what I was going to play, so I told him I was planning on playing his old saxophone.

**Oaks:** He played the saxophone?

**Henson:** And other things. I was a musician for the first part of my life.

**Oaks:** When did you come home from the Air Force?

**Henson:** I was discharged in Omaha in 1952.

**Oaks:** Did you and your wife meet in Omaha?

**Henson:** Yes. It was in Council Bluffs, Iowa. I met her when she was about fifteen, so I waited a couple of years before I married her. My four years was up in January, so we were planning on getting married. Then Uncle Harry Truman extended me during the Korean War, so I served another eight months and twenty-five days. We went ahead and got married.

**Oaks:** Did you still stay off combat?

**Henson:** Yes.

**Oaks:** That is something to be in one location the whole time.

**Henson:** Let me give you the background on it. Before I went into the service, my father and the bishop of the ward gave me a blessing, I'm sure at my mother's prompting. In that blessing, I was promised that I would not see combat.

**Oaks:** Even though you were going right in?

**Henson:** During the Korean War and into the Air Force, you usually would count on combat. He blessed me that I would not see combat if I would stay close to the Church, which I did. I took my basic at Lackland Air Force Base, in San Antonio, Texas. Do you remember Ira Page Stewart? She was our Gospel Doctrine teacher. Her husband was the base adjutant. I went to Washington D.C. for my training. Actually, I got into the band on a fluke.

We were out on the parade ground one day and someone said, “Anyone who has had more than five years on a musical instrument, step forward.”

I figured they would put a band together for a program, so I stepped forward. I was in a band outfit immediately. The corporal came up and told me to get my stuff. I moved; I went to Washington D.C. to train with the Air Force Band. When it came time to send me out, we had a list posted on the bulletin board. Everybody right above me on the list went to El Liguardo, Mexico, and I was the first one to go to Omaha, Nebraska.

**Oaks:** What rank did you retire at?

**Henson:** Sergeant. It was a structured outfit. There were so many each of sergeants, captains, tech sergeants, etc. Just about the time I was to be an NCO, we got a whole band from Guam. We had our best laugh when they tried to get us to re-up (reenlist). That poor recruiter! I feel bad for him because we gave him an awful time. The Air Force wasn’t where I should have been.

**Oaks:** Did you perform in other locations?

**Henson:** Oh yeah. We flew. We did all of the parades in Iowa and Nebraska, and flew down to Kansas. We were primarily regional.

**Oaks:** Then you got out of the band. What came next?

**Henson:** My wife’s family was all Union Pacific Railroad.

**Oaks:** Was she a member of the Church yet? You met at church?

**Henson:** Yes. When I first got to Omaha, I went to the branch and looked around, and it was either kids or old people.

**Oaks:** Or fifteen-year-olds.

**Henson:** I asked the branch president, “Where are the young people?”

He said, “If you want to go with the young people, you have to go across the river in Council Bluffs.” That’s where we met.

My first job out of the service was as a switchman for Union Pacific in the Council Bluffs yard. I knew that wasn’t going to be my life, so I went to the University of Omaha and started in its drafting program. I took several drafting courses and math courses over there at night.

Of course, when you are switching, you work the extra boards. You work the bad times no one else wants to work. At about 10°-below weather, I was out there and decided that it was time. I guess the branch president came out to conference and I rode out with him to BYU. I explored the program and I wanted to be an architect. BYU didn’t have an architecture program, so I enrolled in the civil engineering program. BYU, bless its heart, gave me credit for the number of hours I had at the University of Omaha, but wouldn’t accept any of the courses. So I had to retake all the math classes, but that was no problem, having taken them before.

I was on GI-Bill, and we had Steve when we came out to school, and then Dave right after. I needed additional work. Don Earl put in a little ad for scene painters for an opera. I had done a little painting for road shows in Council Bluffs and figured that would more than qualify me. I and an Indian fellow—I cannot remember his name—both applied, and Don hired us both.

Do you remember the scene shop on lower campus across the street? We got down there to paint scenery; the designer was Judas Hamlin. He brought the rendering in and told us to paint it. I looked at

the Indian fellow and asked him if he had ever painted scenery before, and he said no. We both confessed to Judas, and he gave us a thirty-minute indication on it. But they must have liked it.

**Oaks:** You mixed the paint and everything from square one?

**Henson:** Yes. After the opera was over, the department needed a scene painted, so I came over and worked for Bob Struthers and George Tanner. George was the scene designer. Judas was a graduate assistant. I worked as a scene painter, and at the end of my sophomore year I changed my major to theatre.

**Oaks:** Did H. I. have any involvement in that?

**Henson:** No, not really. I knew him as chairman.

**Oaks:** But your decision to switch majors was not impacted by him?

**Henson:** No. In fact, I fought the system as long as I could. I had a major in drama and a minor in math because I had all the math from engineering. I did not take Acting 101. I did take directing, but it was all technical theatre. Harold bent the rules there and approved that.

After George Tanner left, Carl White was the scene designer. At the end of his first year, George had an offer from American River Junior College in California with much better pay. He didn't understand the politics, though. Ernest Wilkinson, Gerrit de Jong, Harold Hanson—that is a triumvirate to be dealt with. He went in and told them about the new job, expecting them to match his salary.

Harold turned to Ernest and said, "Well, I think we ought to congratulate George on his new job, don't you?"

**Oaks:** Wow! So he got to talk to Ernest?

**Henson:** All three of them! They did things differently then. There it was September of 1957, and they did not have a scene designer.

**Oaks:** So up until that time you had done primarily painting?

**Henson:** No, I had had graduate assistants in the lighting crew, and I was head of the construction crew. I had them all.

**Oaks:** But you hadn't done any designing up until that point?

**Henson:** No, I had done some. I had my graduate degree in theatre and design, and as one of my assignments, I designed one of the first arena theatres done on lower campus. The costume designer directed it and I designed it. If it wasn't the first, it was one of the first.

**Oaks:** So in September of 1957, they lost their main designer.

**Henson:** Yes, I had done all my master's work but I hadn't done my thesis, so I didn't have my degree, and so they got me cheap and dirty. I was something under instructor. "Special Instructor" was my official title.

During my sabbatical, seven years in, I went to talk to the academic vice president, who confused me with Brother Struthers and revealed Bob's salary. At that time, seven years in, I was making more than he was. You were there and in the budget process. The technical crews were not part of the faculty. They were staff, really, in the mental set of things, even though they had academic rank. They were faculty

members, but in the view of the rest of the department, we were staff, even though I made a decision not to appear in any meetings in coveralls, like Bob and George did. I had a tie and a suit on in all of the meetings. I think the salary structure of the department was based on that attitude. I figured out at one time that if I had taken a job at a state school, I probably could have increased my salary by about a \$1,000 a month.

**Oaks:** Were you advanced the year you finished your degree?

**Henson:** I was advanced to instructor.

**Oaks:** But not to assistant professor?

**Henson:** Oh no, I only had a master's. I didn't get my doctorate until 1980.

**Oaks:** Did you stay at instructor rank until you got the doctorate?

**Henson:** Let's see. I was advanced to assistant professor in 1969, then associate in 1972, then full professor in 1975.

**Oaks:** That was before you got your doctorate.

**Henson:** Yes, and that was based on my sabbatical, when I went over to see the academic vice president. My sabbatical was going to be a tour of theatre festivals in Europe. At that time, if you didn't have a doctorate, you were required to work on your doctorate during your sabbatical. However, no one was offering a doctorate, or even an MFA at that time, in scene design. So he wrote me a memo that said since I had a terminal degree in my field, I could do it. So when it came for professor, I had a terminal degree and was eligible.

**Oaks:** Did you do a tour then?

**Henson:** I did. I spent a week in London and did London theatre. I went to the Edinburgh Festival; spent a little time in Denmark; went to Salzburg, Austria; then came back and spent a week in New York.

**Oaks:** That was mid-seventies then?

**Henson:** That was in 1967. When I landed in New York, I was broke. I went to cash a check at a bank and they had to check my bank account. I was sitting there talking to a girl and we were conversing about why I was in New York.

After I told her I was there to do some theatre, she said, "I have something that I bet you would enjoy."

I said, "What?"

She said, "Well, I've got some tickets to *Man of La Mancha*."

It was the first run, center, fifth row.

I said, "You cash that check, and see how interested I am in them!"

She sold them to me for actual price; she could have scalped them for hundreds of dollars.

The most fun part was that I had two of them, and I was the only one there. I went to the box office asking if I could refund it. The girl in the ticket office was shocked; she'd never had that experience.

When I went to the show, the man in the seat next to me had bought it on the street. It had never gone through the office. It went out on the street and was sold for several hundred dollars.

**Oaks:** What teachers really impressed you during your training period in the 50's? Which ones impacted you most?

**Henson:** I don't know. I wasn't interested in class work. I was interested in being on stage and doing it.

I think of one course in my master's degree, which I probably got into the most. It was a course that had been set up in Radio, TV, and Communications. It was with Owen Rich, Lynn McKinley, and a couple of other faculty. It was more of a symposium than lecture class. Each of us was assigned a facet to write a paper on, and then we presented the paper. My word! We were into the communication theory and communication programming and stuff. Everybody knew it, and it was wonderful. I don't even know how I got into that class.

**Oaks:** Do you remember students you worked with?

**Henson:** Of course Fred Adams and his sister Martha were there. Carolyn Pierce was in there. I designed her *Joan of Arc*, and that was one of my first designs.

**Oaks:** You were there for the expansion that occurred during the late 50's and early 60's. How did you feel about the new building? Did you have any part designing technically?

**Henson:** Because I was a draftsman, I could take the plans and read them. Nobody else in the department could. That's when I got close to Harold. He was chairman, and was going to all the meetings about the building, and I went with him.

The architect would say something and I'd say, "I don't see that on the plans."

He would say, "Oh, well, it's not on this version."

Harold was very smart, very wise. He would always wait until the last. All the other departments would go through their own things and then leave. Then we had the architect. So we got pretty much what we wanted, until he brought in the estimate on the building. Have you heard that?

**Oaks:** I've heard that it was reduced because of the budget.

**Henson:** It was a module reduction. In other words, in the plans, everything was shrunk. An inch to a foot was now an inch to eleven inches.

Being a draftsman, I said, "Oh, no, you can't do that." But they did.

That's when we lost the proscenium width, the stage depth, and they got hundreds of square feet of nothing. If you move the walls like that, you haven't saved a nickel. I was earnest.

It took them literally months. You can imagine how step heights and door sizes had to be readjusted to be able to do it. In the planning process, Harold took a sabbatical and appointed me as temporary acting chairman. I was chairman when he was gone for a quarter. In that period of time, they took down the speech center for the Wilkinson Center construction.

**Oaks:** So you moved down by the houses way out by the stadium?

**Henson:** First we moved down to lower campus on the third floor. Then they got the Stedman House for us when the construction of the Fine Arts Center was being done.

It was an interesting time. One thing that may not come to light is that in the original concept of the building, every office and classroom was to be wired for recording: both video and audio. That system had not been designed. One of Boyer's sound department boys was going to design the system.

We found out after they had started putting in the first floor, he was going in and saying, "Give me a knockout here; we need to put a one-inch pipe through this wall." They came to me and told me it wasn't going to get done.

A member of the electric engineering department from Australia and I were assigned to put it on paper. I started, and thank goodness we had an electrician strike. The building stopped, and we had access to the general foreman too. We met frequently and decided where everything would go. Having lived in the building, you know that system isn't there.

It went down the tube when we got all the wiring done and said, "Okay, where is the control room for this?"

They said, "Control room? Oh, how many amplifiers would that take? \$600,000 for the equipment?"

The closest we got was the music control room. It was about the only thing that survived.

One summer, Bob and I pulled a coax cable and monofilament through a lot of the pipes. We worked one of the summer terms.

**Oaks:** So you got the wires in?

**Henson:** Yes, the wires are there, but probably all dead by now.

**Oaks:** How did you feel about the building after it opened?

**Henson:** Truth? There was nobody on the faculty who had ever worked in a building like that.

**Oaks:** Yes, that would be true; you'd gone down to College Hall, and over to the Smith Building, where you had to do the adaptation there.

**Henson:** Yes, so it was wonderful! Metten got the first production, and Ivan Crosland played the lead. It was the play with the telescope. That was the first one on the Pardoe stage.

**Oaks:** How much did you have to do with the adaptation on the Smith after H.I. came?

**Henson:** Nothing. He did that. It was just a low dais. It was a chapel.

**Oaks:** They had intentionally not put in anything so that it would be theatrically there. They had to drop the lines, and then everything had to go up and had to come down.

**Henson:** He got them to build a floor, a stage, above that, at the height of the modesty rail.

**Oaks:** Made of Softwood, so you could nail into it.

**Henson:** Yes, but it still had the choral risers in the back. Then they had to raise the two rooms at the back, and that is when the stairway occurred. We went down under them for the dressing rooms.

**Oaks:** Then they had to put the holes up there to be able to drop the lines in and pull up the lighting and curtains.

**Henson:** In the early days, the music department insisted that those light rails and curtains come down because it affected their acoustics. I remember standing on the stage and looking at the little strip of velour. Then I looked at the back of the auditorium, and there was a wall, and along the side all of the windows were velour. That had to come down. We finally broke that and were able to leave them there.

**Oaks:** Yours was a replacement position, right? We talked about that. What were your dreams and how were they fulfilled?

**Henson:** Like I said, I wanted to be an architect. I made friends with Lee Nell, who was an architect downtown, in some of my city positions.

I used to kid him: “Well, Lee, what are you working on?”

He’d say, “Well, I’m doing a grammar school,” or something like that.

“Oh, that’s a shame. I just finished designing a gothic cathedral.” So it was satisfying that way. I did a lot of architecture work as a scene designer. It was fulfilling.

**Oaks:** I was really impressed with the work you could do. The set you designed for the *Romeo and Juliet* that I was in, with the double turntables and all of the pieces on that. It was great.

**Henson:** They still have scars in the stage floor from those turntables. They were heavy.

**Oaks:** That was a fantastic design, and I did an adaptation of that when I was at graduate school in Minnesota. I had never taken a set design class, and when I was there, I was required to do that. In addition to drafting and design, I had to do watercolor renderings. I did renderings of three of the turntable settings and won an award for it!

**Henson:** I’m glad you could use the idea!

**Oaks:** It was really fantastic. I thought that design was just great.

**Henson:** We did some interesting things. Do you remember the opera we did, which Whitman directed? I can’t remember what the opera was, but it was all open staircases and open platforms. They were levels.

**Oaks:** That may have been in the sixties, when I wasn’t here.

**Henson:** We didn’t have the escape stairs on, which was the stability for the whole thing.

The cast was wondering, “Are we really going to do it up there?”

Whitman said, “Let me show you!”

He charged up one set and across the platforms, up and down the other, and he came back and sat down and took a deep breath. But he made his point. When the escape steps went on, it was stable.

There were a lot of fun times. I remember the one we did for *Sound of Music*. That was a turntable, and that thing was heavy. Bob had rigged an electric motor to a racing slick to turn it, but it still wouldn’t turn.

We got under it, laying on our backs in the turntable, and he looked over at me and said, “Okay, what good is your degree doing you now?” It was all hands on.

Finally, we got about six guys on the back side of it, and along with the racing slick, we were able to rotate it.

Then the fun one was a musical, *Oliver*, and one of the scenes needed a bridge. I had two buildings on the side and the turntable in the middle. This building came down and met a facet in the turntable and became a bridge.

The physical plant guys came over and said, “We’ve got to see that! How did you do that?”

Of course it just counterweighted. It was fun. There were a lot of sets and challenges.

**Oaks:** I really enjoyed working with you on *Glass Menagerie*. It was a beautiful set. We even used it the next year for the end of the season program.

You mentioned that you worked with the City Council. What did you do to communicate with the community? What positions did you hold in the city?



**Henson:** In 1964, I was appointed to the planning commission. I was on the commission for twelve years, and was chairman for six years. So for a long time I was involved in the development of Provo in the 60's and 70's.

I was appointed to the Kennedy Center in 1970 by the president. I left the Planning Commission in '71, and then was reappointed in '74, and was awarded the Utah County Volunteer of the Year in '76. In '83, after Craig Hall, a member of the city council, moved up to Idaho, I was appointed to fill his term. I ran that fall and was elected and beat Mrs. Utah. The following year, I was awarded the Provo Freedom Award in 1985. In 1986, I was again chairman of the council for two years. Had the mayor been gone, I would have been mayor. In fact, I was the vice-chairman of the committee that changed the former government in Provo from commission form to the council form.

While I was on the council, I was involved with the Metropolitan Water District as a liaison. After I went off the council, I was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Water District. Wayne Hillier was the manager. Wayne was an "up-front, against everything" type of manager. When Jordanelle was built, he was one of the first in opposition to it. There were several senators in other states who were in opposition to it, and he sent them information continually. When he got to be sixty-five, the board decided that they would accept his retirement. He was not happy with that, but it was either that or get fired, and he assumed it would be better for him to retire.

I was then appointed manager and did that part-time. He had been a full-time manager and had a part-time accountant. His salary was in the neighborhood of \$100,000 a year. I told the council I could do his job part-time, without the accountant. They saw the dollars and appointed me. I served as the chairman of the Metropolitan Water District for seventeen years—part of the time before I retired, and part of it afterwards.

**Oaks:** When did you finish that, then?

**Henson:** About two years ago, in 2008. I should give you my campaign brochure. I have served on about every committee in this town. When the city building was built, I was vice-chairman of the advisory committee. I was also on an advisory committee for the hotel and parking garage in downtown Provo.

Lee Nell, Dale Clark, and I were going to build a performance center downtown. Victor Bird, who was the president of the bank, was with us. We optioned the block right across the street, north, from the city center. It was essentially what they have now, only we were going to take up the whole block and do it, but we couldn't get the interest or funding, so that fell by the way. So I've paid my dues in Provo.

**Oaks:** You talked a lot about the technology and changes. What lighting system was originally in the Pardoe?

**Henson:** When we were in the Smith Building, we had an Ariel Davis slider type of console. Ariel wanted it in the Harris Fine Arts Center. Century and Kliegl, and some of the big companies, bid on it, and the bids were in the \$45,000–60,000 range. Ariel came in at about \$15,000. He put the lighting system in all of the theatres for \$15,000.

**Oaks:** That is incredible!

**Henson:** He wanted to say, "Now if you want to see my equipment, go to the Fine Arts Center." And he did. He had all levels of his equipment there.

**Oaks:** When was it changed, then? How long was his system in place?

**Henson:** It did pretty well up until the electronics came on the scene, and he wasn't in that field.

**Oaks:** He was really resistant.

**Henson:** It was changed to electronic while I was still there.

**Oaks:** But you weren't still in lighting at that point?

**Henson:** Not really. I did lighting designs, but I wasn't really in the lighting program.

**Oaks:** Who were some of your students that you remember?

**Henson:** Well, the one that comes to mind is Gary Mack. He was my student, and was, of course, down at Cedar City for years and years. He was on faculty for a year. Cliff Cabanilla was another student. He was in San Bernardino, Riverside, and that area, with the Shakespeare Company for years and years.

There were so many students! The one that got me, though—I can't remember what class—was just before I retired.

A little girl came into class and said, "Brother Henson, do you remember my grandma? She was in your class."

I thought, *It's time!*

**Oaks:** Yes, that really does get to you. What was the focus of your research and creative work? I know your dissertation was on the history of the department.

**Henson:** My creative work was my designs.

**Oaks:** You had to research for those.

**Henson:** Right. I spent hours in the library for some of those.

**Oaks:** Do you have any photographs of your designs?

**Henson:** I'll give you what I have. We probably ought to, in addition to that, note the Hill Cumorah Pageant.

**Oaks:** Yes, we should talk about that.

**Henson:** I think it was 1960 when Harold came in and said, "I want a new set for Hill Cumorah."

I said, "Harold, I'd be happy to, but I've never even seen the pageant."

"Well, I'll give you a recording."

I said, "No, I think I've got to walk the hill."

"Well, okay. You can be presiding elder and ride the bus back with the Young Women." We used to take five busloads of sisters from BYU.

**Oaks:** Five busloads? They'd need to match up with elders.

**Henson:** Right. They'd bring all the elders from the mission in to do the pageant. Plus some volunteers.

Now can you imagine that: five busloads of women across the United States? From Utah to New York? It was interesting, and giggly, giggly, giggly when we left. Harold had outlined individual scripture study for each of them on the bus. We got to South Bend, Indiana—Notre Dame, into that branch—Sunday night.

On the bus, I had put together a sacrament meeting. There were all the branch members, and then with five busloads, we were packed. There were people standing outside, the windows and doors were opened so they could hear.

Those kids put on the most spiritual sacrament meeting I had ever heard. Four of them got together and prepared—on a bus, traveling—a musical number as a quartet. They sang beautifully. When we arrived in Cumorah the next morning, they were missionaries. The Spirit was just . . . boom.

The most telling incident in the Pageant that told me what it was like to work for the Lord was this: they had paired off the students as two sisters and two elders to proselyte to the crowd. One sister had been in a group that had been discussing, and it came into a point in the discussion where she needed a scripture and quoted it. She turned to the elder and asked if that was correct. He told her it was, and she just burst into tears. She came up, and I was the first one she found. I went and sat down with her and she told me about it.

She said, “I have not read that scripture since I was in junior high seminary.” Here she was as a college student.

The other thing at Pageant that you always hear are the rain stories. I was there on one. President Romney was a member of the first presidency and was there. It had been raining all day, and all the missionaries were praying for the rain to stop. When President Romney came out of the audience, I went up to him, and he wanted to know where Harold’s office was. I took him up there. You have to understand there was Harold, the mission president, President Romney, and me.

I thought, *What’s wrong with this picture? Me.* So I left.

President Romney prayed, and Harold said, “I was afraid to open my eyes because I expected to see the Savior standing there.” It was that personal of a prayer. He said, “He did not mention the rain once. President Romney said, ‘You know the work that has been done here. You know that these people have come.’”

And they had! They were there under tarps and umbrellas and everything.

Harold continued, “He said, ‘If we are to present the Pageant tonight, please give us a burning in our bosom.’”

They came out and I went with them to a place on the side of the stage where you can look at the audience without being seen.

President Romney turned to Harold and said, “Harold, how do you feel?”

Harold said, “I feel like we should do it. I’ve got the burning.”

With five minutes or so to start, I took the trumpeters to the top of the hill for the first opening. I sent them into place in the rain. I gave the cue for the lights, the sound, and I might as well have said, “And stop the rain.” The minute those lights came on, the rain stopped. There was so much moisture in the air you could see every beam of light. There was no rain for about an hour and a half after the pageant was over, and everyone was able to get into their cars. Then it rained all night and the next morning.

**Oaks:** What year was that?

**Henson:** I don’t remember. My first year was 1960. That was the year Laurie was born.

**Oaks:** How often did you go after that?

**Henson:** I went every year for the first seven years, from ’60 to ’67. Then Karl started alternating with me, and then eventually took it over until Harold retired. Then we were both released. The set that I designed as a result of the first one was there for about thirty years. It was taken and used after Harold’s retirement. Chuck Metten was on the Church committee, and they assigned him—well, there was an interim of a couple of years after Harold retired, but then Chuck took over. Chuck didn’t know pageants; he was a stage man. He had the Church build him a million-and-a-half-dollar stage on the Hill Cumorah. I haven’t seen it. I’m sorry, you don’t do a pageant on a stage.

Those were good years. Amazing years. I was there when the Gates music was recorded. I wasn’t in the recording session at the Tabernacle, but I was at the hill when we integrated it. Evans from KSL integrated the sound system.

**Oaks:** Did you work on *Sand in their Shoes*?

**Henson:** Yeah. Somebody designed it; I can't remember who. Bob and I put it up.

**Oaks:** It was a huge stage.

**Henson:** Yes, a huge stage and a cyc. Do you remember that cyc?

It was the night of the department banquet and Bob and I were sitting in the truck making a list of where we should go. The wind came up over that stadium and down, and tore it down. Guy wires just went "Pop, pop, pop!" Next morning, we called the scaffolding company, got a whole new load of scaffolding down, and filled it back up.

Then it was interesting. Brother Fletcher, of course, was in the engineering building across the street from the Speech Center. I'd get a call.

"Henson. I need to talk to you. I'll be right over."

"No, no, no, I'll come." Here I was, a lowly instructor, and he had a nationally known reputation, but he'd come over. We'd talk about how we were going to get his three, six-foot-square woofers up, out of sight lines, but still in sound lines. That was quite an engineering feat.

**Oaks:** You retired in 1992?

**Henson:** Yep.

**Oaks:** Do you want to reflect on the experience of working at BYU during the time you served?

**Henson:** That's the one I said I wasn't going to comment on. I read that question and thought, *There will be no comment on that* (chuckles).

No, I had good memories. The real truth is that I don't have memories. I'm in a dementia of some kind. I can't remember a lot of things that happened at BYU. I couldn't give you a year-by-year in any way, shape, or form. A lot of the details are gone—and incidents. But it was a good life.

**Oaks:** Where should BYU faculty and students be focusing their efforts and energies? Do you have an opinion on that?

**Henson:** I think that instead of worrying about professional whatevers, they ought to hire faculty at BYU based on their testimonies. Pure and simple. That is the unique aspect—they can get the other things anywhere in the world, but they can't get them from people who have a testimony of the gospel. I think with your experience, the people who had the stronger testimonies were the stronger the faculty members.

**Oaks:** Yes, they were, and they were the ones that impacted the students positively. They made a difference in lives.

**Henson:** Let me tell you, I'm grateful for the five years I taught the Book of Mormon. I loved that. It was much better than I expected it to be. I took Book of Mormon as a student, and I decided I wasn't going to do it that way.

**Oaks:** It is a powerful experience. I think they ought to require the regular faculty to teach the Book of Mormon classes. I think it would improve the whole university if the faculty had to get in and teach it occasionally.

**Henson:** One of the valuable things for me personally was that when we started, we went over with the religion faculty members, and had a full spring term with them. We started at nine, broke for lunch, went

back at one, and then went until four, going through the entire Book of Mormon. My word, I just sat there. It was astounding.

**Oaks:** How many years did you teach it?

**Henson:** I think it was five or six years, right at the end of my tenure. It was when I had the Theatre Ed program. Bob had that just before his death, when he came back with his doctorate. It was good.

**Oaks:** Any other comments that you have?

**Henson:** I don't know. There it is.

**Oaks:** I really appreciate all the information I was able to get.